CHILD DEVELOPMENT SERVICES

FACING THE NEED

Presented to

The Cabinet Committee on
Social Policy and Programs

by the

New Brunswick Advisory Council on the Status of Women

September 1986
Moncton

87-01504/

Preamble

The New Brunswick Advisory Council on the Status of Women has been working on the issue of child care since its very first meeting in 1978. Our first challenge on the issue was to show that women in N.B. wanted and would use day care. The need for child care services was easily proven and the Council's position evolved through the years to a comprehensive proposal for child development services under a unified government division.

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SECTION I CHILD CARE: AN ESSENTIAL SERVICE

Today, families can no longer provide all the care and services that the extended family used to provide. They must share child care with other social institutions. Furthermore, women are no longer willing to be totally responsible for the "reproduction" of society and they expect that essential tasks be shared within society. The role of government is sometimes defined as doing for people what they cannot do for themselves. Like the roads and bridges we need to get to work, we need quality child care. Child care services are essential to modern life.

The Advisory Council believes that a more comprehensive approach must be taken to services for children: the parent's and society's needs may vary but the child's needs remain quite constant. Whether we adults call it family care, day care, kindergarten or after-school care, children need a safe, caring setting and they want to explore and play and learn. Our approach to child care services must put emphasis on coordination of services or else the child's needs will be compartmentalized and they will receive less than adequate service.

Child care services are advantageous for children's social and educational development and for early detection of childhood problems. Through the study of early childhood development, we now know much more about the critical development changes that take place during the first few years of life (birth to 12 years). We know how to enhance normal and desirable development of the young child, and also to redress troubled development.

A. Critical development changes which take place during the early years and their effect on later learning potential.

Research has shown that "at least one third of the development at age 18 has taken place prior to the child's entrance into the first grade of school."[1] This development - learning to learn - is the prerequisite for later learning. Research further shows

that if learning has gone poorly during the first few grades, "much of the work of the schools thereafter must be disciplinary or remedial."[2] As we discuss later in our needs study, not all parents, for various economic and social reasons, can encourage the early development (first five years) during that entire critical period.

Lack of resources, large group size, and high teacher/student ratios may further hinder that development during the first three years of school.

B. The long-term payoffs of early childhood development programs

Studies of Head Start and other preschool programs have shown large returns on dollars invested in these programs. A 248% return on the original investment was cited in one study because of savings due to reductions in the need for special education classes and institutional care as well as in the number of grade failures and school dropouts.[3] Early detection and treatment, ensured by high quality early childhood programs, were the keys to these savings.

Other research has indicated the relative and long-term scholastic advantages for normal children who have attended high quality kindergarten programs as compared to those who have not. Better rates of employment and lower rates of problems with the law later in life are other beneficial spin-offs.[4]

C. The nature of successful programs created to encourage and develop learning potentials.

In our needs discussion we refer to the various facets of the child's development (social, physical, emotional, intellectual) which must be supported during the first 12 years of the child's

life. The programs which demonstrated dramatic economic returns and social benefits attended to these needs by supporting in various ways the child's free exploration and free expression - by nurturing the development of the whole child. Both full-time and part-time early childhood development services and the primary educational system must therefore seek to nurture the development of the whole child, must be part of a continuum in supporting the self-directed development of each child.

SECTION II NEEDS: AN IN-DEPTH STUDY

High quality, readily available and affordable early childhood development service options are a necessity in today's society. Children, parents and society as a whole each have particular child care related needs. We will discuss those needs in some depth and then discuss how best they can be met - through what services with what standards.

Needs of Today's Children

The first eight years in a child's life are recognized as being developmentally the most important,[5] and it is crucial that during these years the child's social, physical, emotional and intellectual needs are sensitively nurtured. The child must have the full opportunity to grow in relation to himself or herself, others, and his or her environment.

Support in Learning how to Learn

Children love to explore their environment. While at play, they encounter new concepts of space, movement, texture, weight, size relationships and people;[6] in short, they learn about their world through their senses, and in doing so direct their own learning - learn how to learn. Such self-directed, active learning helps build upon their inherent desire to learn and thus build self-confidence.

More than anything else our children need this skill - knowing how to learn - for on it all else in the child's social, emotional, intellectual and physical growth is built. If today's child is to cope successfully with the educational, training, and work force demands and stresses of the future, then that child must have the ability and desire to learn, know how to learn, and possess the self-confidence, self-love, and self-identity to continue learning, exploring, trying.

Socialization

Today's typical child is a single child or may have one sibling.[7] Therefore many children do not have much opportunity to socialize, especially on a regular basis, with other children before entering grade 1. Basic social skills, such as sharing, taking turns, conversing, dealing with competition, developing respect of others, developing interests and ideas with peers, and developing leadership, may be underdeveloped in the child who has not had the opportunity to interact with other children. Among other things, the transition to school may be unnecessarily difficult for such a child.

Motor Skills Development

Large- and small-muscle development and eye-hand coordination are essential to young children's learning.[8] Children need indoor and outdoor space and certain tools to learn, develop and strengthen these skills, but many families do not have the outdoor space for their children to play in, nor even adequate indoor space, and many are not able to afford the materials that encourage such development.

A Stimulating and Stable Environment

If they are to develop to their full potential, children need a loving, stimulating environment where they are encouraged to explore and interact with others, where they feel the respect of and receive encouragement from their peers and caregiver, where their abilities and limits are recognized. They also need a stable environment. Children are stressed by the fragmentation of their world, particularly if it occurs often, as caused, for

example, by the shuttling between several caregivers. Scenarios where a child must commute daily between a kindergarten and a day care center are undesirable. Not only does the shuttling itself stress the child, but so does the strain which this travelling puts on the family.

Screening

So that children have the best chances possible to explore their abilities, talents and interests, their health and well-being must be assured. They need early and regular hearing and eye tests, dental checkups and someone ensuring that their basic physical, nutritional and health needs are being met and that they receive their vaccinations.

Special Needs Children - Support

Children with special needs due to disease or a physical, neurological or social problem have the same basic developmental needs as other children. Of primary importance to a special needs child is early intervention, "the earlier ... begun, the more likely the child will overcome the handicapping condition"[9]. Special equipment and specialized workers may be required to facilitate the integration of a special needs child into a group (whether into the family or a group of children). Cooperation between community resource groups and early detection, remedial, rehabilitative and medical agencies are required to ensure that the child's special needs are met.

Before-school, After-school, Noontime, and Holiday Care

Many children are left alone before and after school, at noontime, on school holidays or on teachers' professional development days.[10] A group in point is the latchkey

children who after school return home with a key to an empty house. In 1979, the Canadian Commission for the International Year of the Child stated in its report For Canada's Children that "there are probably over one million 'latchkey' children in Canada"[11] - approximately one latchkey child to every 40 Canadians, one latchkey child to every five children. An even larger group of children are those who on holidays or on the teachers' development days must spend part or whole days alone.

Parents of these children care about their children as much as other parents; however, the rising cost of raising children, as well as the cost of living in general, has demanded two-earner families. Single parents, whose numbers are growing for numerous reasons, are caught in an even tighter bind, having to bear entirely alone the cost of raising a family.

Thus, because of their parents' bind (unable to afford or find before- and after-school, noontime or holiday care for their children), these children lack basic supervision to ensure their safety and general well-being and miss out on stimulating developmental activities which a caring adult could provide or encourage. Children in 'swap shop' child care arrangements do not necessarily fare better.

Needs of Today's Parents

Parents who work in the home and parents who also work outside the home share certain concerns regarding the care and development of their children. Depending on their labour force status, parents may need either part-time or full-time support in providing child and developmental care for their children, and in some cases may need both.

A Universal Concern - Socialization

Many parents with only one or two children are concerned about their children's limited opportunities to socialize with other children. They recognize that other children stimulate their children's interests and development in a way that adults cannot necessarily do. They want their children to develop and ultimately have a sense of identity and self-confidence and a respect for others when interacting with their peers. They also recognize the need for their children to develop social skills early so that they can adapt comfortably to the school environment.

Sharing Developmental Care

Changing economic and social conditions and expectations have created the need for society to share child care with parents. As the Canadian Commission for the International Year of the Child stated in its 1979 report For Canada's Children:

> with the cost of child-rearing rising, it is unrealistic to expect parents to shoulder the full financial cost of raising the next generation.... Since healthy, well cared for children are a joy and an asset to their society, the care and well-being of our children should be a responsibility and trust shared by society as a whole.[12]

Let us examine in more depth the reasons for needing to share child and developmental care.

i) Parents who work solely in the home

Parents who work only in the home may, for various reasons, need support in providing care for their children. As mentioned,

like all parents, they are concerned about ensuring opportunities for their children to socialize. They may also suffer from a chronic or incapacitating disability or illness or may have part-time commitments (care of a disabled person, community work, upgrading courses, personal development activities) which make it difficult for them to provide full-time child and developmental care continuously until their child enters school.

ii) Parents in the labour force

Most parents - married or single, mother or father - work outside the home. Women and men work to support their families. In 1982, 45.6% of Canadian mothers with children under three worked; 53.4% of Canadian mothers with children between ages three and five worked, and 61.7% of Canadian mothers with children between ages six and fifteen worked.[13] By the year 2000 the participation rate of women will virtually equal men's.[14] Because the cost of raising children is continually rising (in part because parents must raise their children to be able to function in a highly technological, socially-complex society), we can expect the present labour force trends to continue. Parents in the labour force may require full-time and/or part-time support in providing child and developmental care for their children.

iii) Single parents

The number of single parents is rising. Whether they are labour force participants or not, they require support in providing child and developmental care for their children. The sole provider for the family must work and, if unable to find work, must upgrade to become employable. Sharing the same basic concerns and needs regarding child and developmental care as other parents, they are especially concerned that their children have opportunities to socialize and feel accepted and that they encounter another adult role model.

iv) Parents of special needs children

Parents of children with special needs require support in facilitating the development of their children. This means early diagnosis and intervention and may include support from a specialized worker and access to special equipment. In severe cases, these parents may need help in integrating their children into the family and the community. They are especially concerned that their children have opportunities to socialize. Depending on the needs of the child and the parent, the child may require either part-time or full-time child and developmental care.

Early Childhood Development Services Parents Want For Their Children

As we have shown, both parents who work in the home and parents who also work outside the home may desire or require some form of early childhood development service for their children at some point in their children's growth. As children's and families' needs vary, the forms of the early childhood development services must necessarily vary too. Flexibility and variety are the keys: adaptation to the needs of the children, the parents, and their communities. This means variety in length of care, for example: day care or after-school care; and variety in sponsorship, for example: employer, parental, governmental, community or a combination thereof.

Standards of Service Parents Want

Parents who need or desire an early childhood development service for their children want their children to receive the best possible care. They want the caregiver to treat and know each child as an individual so that all facets of the child's development (emotional, physical, social and intellectual) will

be equally and sensitively stimulated. They want the caregiver to know how to give such stimulation when working with a group of children, to be able to recognize the varied needs and ability-levels of each child and to be able to respect and appropriately respond to them. And of course, they require that the basic physical, nutritional and health needs of their child be met.

Society's Needs

Autonomous Citizens

We are in the throes of transition. We are building a new world that yearly becomes more technological, more socially-complex. Citizens of this new and challenging world must possess, among other things, the desire and ability to think, reason, learn, debate, question and lead. They must also be highly sensitive to the needs and problems of others. More than ever in the coming years, society will need autonomous citizens.

Parents face a difficult task in raising their children in isolation to function successfully in this new era. Never has a generation of parents faced such a challenge. Not only are they and their children confronting a new age, but many parents are also far from the built-in familial support system - the extended family. Never have we asked so much from a generation of parents and offered them so little support. Parents need help not only because they as a group need help, but also because society needs parents, and society needs children.

Prevention - Lowering Social Costs

Presently society bears high costs for rehabilitation and remedial measures for adolescents and adults, costs which could be

reduced if the root social or medical condition or problem were diagnosed early in a child's development and treated then. As the Head Start programs for disadvantaged children have demonstrated, early childhood development programs, especially when coupled with parental involvement, produce children less likely to fail a grade, more likely to finish school, more likely to have high self-esteem, more likely, in short to be functioning members of society.[15] Part of the reason for these positive results was that parents who were involved in their children's preschool Head Start program and who had had low vocational expectations for their children tended to raise those expectations.

The money saved in rehabilitative and remedial work with these children is enormous, the money saved in social assistance payments probably even greater.

Summary Statement of Need

Given that many children do not have the opportunity to socialize with other children on a regular basis; given that social and economic conditions have created different forms of families; given that the cost of raising children is constantly rising; given that many families live far from relatives; and given that, more and more, society needs autonomous people able to cope and desirous of learning new concepts and skills throughout life; then the need for high quality, readily available and affordable early childhood development services is of paramount importance.

SECTION III Meeting the Needs of Children, Parents and Society

For various social and economic reasons parents cannot meet the needs of their children all of the time. What is society's role in helping parents meet their children's needs? Society through government leadership, incentives and funding schemes must ensure that a variety of affordable early childhood development services are readily available to parents and their children.

Definitions

What exactly are these services?

The term early childhood development services refers to various forms of early childhood development programs that are intended to nurture the developmental needs of the whole child and which are designed for children up to 12 years of age.

They are:

day care (also called preschool program)

- full-day child development and child care for preschool-aged children (birth to five years)
- also provides after-school care for six-to-12-year-olds;

family/community day care

- full-day child development and child care for children of all ages (like day care);
- non-center based;

cooperatives/playgroups

- a part-time child development and child care program for children of all ages, usually with some parental involvement;

nursery school

- a part-time child development and child care program for four-year-olds;

kindergarten

- a part-time, full-time, or alternate day full-time child development and child care program for five-year-olds;

after-school care

- a child development and child care program for six-to-12-year olds;

specialized programs

- part-time or full-time child development and child care programs (including specialized workers and equipment), whenever possible integrated into regular programs, designed to facilitate the integration of special needs children into their community;

parental support programs

- to help parents meet the needs of exceptional children
- parent effectiveness training.

Note:

These definitions make it clear that in a day care center there are child development programs for children of various ages and mental and physical abilities; in a good quality center where

there are five-year-olds, for example, a kindergarten program exists. Good quality day care programs recognize, as the definition indicates, that child development and child care are two elements which must necessarily be integrated.

In short, the various early childhood development services recognize that while family and community needs may vary, the child's needs remain the same.

Standards

As we have stated, children need individual attention and encouragement as they self-direct their learning and parents want their children to receive such care when they cannot be with them. The individual needs of the child cannot be adequately met if she or he is in a large group of children with only one adult supervising. Therefore certain standards must exist for all early childhood development services (day care and its various forms: preschool, nursery school, kindergarten, after-school care).

1. small group size (existing provincial day care standards are excellent; by definition they must apply to kindergartens, which, as we have explained, is a child development and child care program for five-year-olds already in many day care programs);

2. low child/adult ratio (maximum for five-year-olds: 12 children to one adult; 24 children to two adults);

3. highly qualified early childhood development personnel
   - An early childhood development worker must have special training to be able to recognize the normal ranges of abilities in young children of various ages and to be able to stimulate the physical, emotional, intellectual and social growth of the child within the context of a group;

   - Various competency levels are possible, for example:[16]

      - Early Childhood Development Supervisor
         - one per group of children
         - requires a degree in early childhood education

      - Early Childhood Development Associate
         - requires university/community college training in early childhood education

      - Early Childhood Development Aide
         - requires community college training in early childhood education, on the job training.

Criteria

Early childhood development services must also be based on five criteria (the reasons for which have been shown in our needs' discussion):

1. Learning through play;

2. Parental involvement;

3. Flexibility: a variety of models to meet the varying needs of children, parents and communities;

4. Integration
   a) of child development and child care
   b) of special needs children into regular early childhood development programs
   c) of various forms of early childhood services under one roof (e.g. kindergarten - early childhood development and child care for five-year-olds - within a day care program; after-school care in schools);

5. Stable environment for child
   a) the marriage rather than fragmentation of child care and child development
   b) minimum commuting between various caregivers, ensured through coordination of services, a multi-disciplinary approach.

Costs

The benefits of early childhood services far outweigh the costs. In their discussion on costs of preschool education in Young Children Grow Up: The Effects of the Perry Preschool Programs on Youth Through Age 15, L. J. Schweinhart and D.P. Weikart showed a 248 percent return on the original investment.[17] In preventing in many cases the need for remedial or rehabilitative measures much later on in the child's life, we can expect an even greater return.

Conclusion and recommendations

The only obstacle to a quality system of child care is our imagination. If we persist in saying that such a system is too expensive, we only expose our lack of appreciation of the need. Child care is as basic to society as its survival.

The blinders we have on when it comes to the need for child care in society result in part from our non-acceptance of women as permanent members of the labour force. If we were to plan a society where 62% of parents worked outside the home, we would certainly plan for parental leaves, child care and child development services.

The role of government in ensuring a network of quality child care services is as much one of coordination as of funding. We must ensure highly accessible services that make the child's needs a higher priority than jurisdictional concerns.

Parents do not expect free day care. In a study the Advisory Council commissioned from a Université de Moncton research team in 1981, we found that most parents expect to have to pay for child care. But the full cost of child care cannot be covered by parent's fees, especially if we want to start paying child care workers a living wage. Government subsidies for capital and operational costs must be available to licensed child development services in order to guarantee their survival but also to make the fees affordable.

The government must also encourage the start-up of new services. In New Brunswick, there is a major shortage of day care spaces, especially infant care and after-school care.

The following are the Advisory Council's recommendations:

I For Policy

That the governments of Canada and of New Brunswick recognize in policy:

1. that the first 12 years of the child's life are crucial to the child's development and later success in life;
2. that each child has unique needs created by the child's individual character and abilities, by the needs of the child's family, and the needs of the child's community;
3. that economic and social conditions have created different forms of families with varying needs;
4. that early childhood development services seek the total development of the whole child (intellectual, physical, social, emotional and moral) with activities and programs emphasizing learning through play techniques;
5. that child development and child care are inseparable elements of early childhood development services;
6. that parental involvement is needed in early childhood development services;
7. that exceptional children benefit from integration into their community - socialization with their peers.

II For Action

That the federal government:

a) replace the Canada Assistance Plan's welfare criteria for day care funding with broader criteria reflecting the varying needs of children, families and communities in the 1980's. This amendment in the cost-sharing criteria would launch the development of a national network of quality child development services that are affordable for all parents.

b) amend the Income Tax Act to provide tax incentives for all centers and institutions offering licensed early childhood development services. This would include workplace day care, family day care, etc. We concur with the Cooke Task Force on Child Care on this subject.

c) amend the Income Tax Act to allow parents to deduct the full cost of child care up to $3,500.00.

We include for your information our recommendations to the provincial government on this topic.

That the government of New Brunswick:

1. establish an early childhood development services division in recognition of the importance of the early childhood years for the child as well as for the productive future of society, to ensure that the development of the whole child is nurtured in early childhood development services. This division could have a central office to develop and establish policy and the appropriate regional staff to carry out the policy and coordinate service.

The proposed early childhood development services division should carry out the following recommendations:

a) ensure flexibility and variety in affordable and readily available early childhood development services, (variety in length of care, in sponsorship, place, etc.);
b) ensure coordination of early childhood development services among the services themselves and with early detection/ rehabilitation groups and community resource agencies;

c) stipulate that early childhood development services ensure early detection, diagnosis, and treatment of problems through linkages with relevant services (e.g. public and mental health agencies, the Department of Health & Community Services);

d) provide the means for the integration of exceptional children into early childhood development services;

e) encourage parental involvement in early childhood development services;

f) ensure that programs for parents are widely available (e.g. parent effectiveness training, and support programs in learning how to nurture exceptional children);

g) set high competency levels for early childhood development personnel, requiring specialized early childhood education training;

h) encourage upgrading for current early childhood development personnel, e.g. with abundant and affordable opportunities to pursue further early childhood education training;

i) provide incentives for early childhood development service providers to meet licensing requirements, (e.g. various grants);

j) provide per diems for early childhood development service facilities which with reasonable parental fees would allow early childhood service providers to meet their financial obligations;

k) require that both full-time and part-time early childhood development services meet provincial standards.

FOOTNOTES

1. Benjamin, S. Bloom, All Our Children Learning, (New York: 1981), p. 72.

2. Ibid., p. 107.

3. D.P. Weikart and L.T. Schweinhart, Young Children Grow Up: The Effects of the Perry Preschool Programs on Youth Through Age 15, (Ypsilanti: 1980), p. 69.

4. Margie Mayfield et al, "A Review of Early Childhood Education Models And Programs", B.C. Kindergarten Needs Assessment (Victoria: 1981) p. 19-22; Irving Lazar and Richard Darlington, Lasting Effects After Preschool, (Washington, D.C.: 1979) p. 19-20.

5 Bloom, op. cit., p. 106-9.

6. Otto Weininger, psychologist, discussing early childhood development in Rona Maynard's article "Are Baby Boom Mothers Pushing Their Kids Too Hard?", Chatelaine, March, 1984, p. 194.

7. Statistics Canada, 1981 Census: 1.5 children per N.B. family.

8. T. D. Yawkey and S.B. Silvern, "Kindergarten Goals and Contemporary Education", Young Children, September, 1976, p. 29.

9. K. W. Brooks and Carol Deen, "Improving Accessibility of Preschool Facilities for the Handicapped", Young Children, March, 1981, p. 19.

10. School children have 182 instructional days per school year. Of days in the school year lost are 11 to 13 professional development days for teachers. (Source: Board of School Trustees, District No. 15, March, 1984.)

11. Canadian Commission for the International Year of The Child, For Canada's Children, (Ottawa: 1979), p. 27.

12. Ibid.

13. Labour Force, Statistics Canada, 71-001, May 1982. Provincial breakdowns are not available.

14. Task Force on Labour Market Development, Labour Market Development in the 1980's, Dodge Task Force, (Ottawa: 1981), p. 93.

15. Lazar and Darlington, op. cit., pp. 17-20.

16. Compare: Roberta Bouvert et al, "Career Ladder for Personnel Working With Young Children and Their Families", A Survey of State Certification Requirements of Teachers of Young Children from State Teacher Certification Offices and A Survey of Recognition from Non-Government Organizations, (Washington, D.C.: 1983), p. 115-116, and CAP 5, "Progress Report on the Center Accreditation Project", Young Children, November, 1983, pp. 43-44.

17. Weikart and Schweinhart, op. cit., p. 69.

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